

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

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HOUSING MANAGEMENT DIVISION AUTHORIZED

NAHO's Annual Meeting in Washington last month may well go down in housing history as the occasion on which housing management really came of age. On Wednesday, October 12th, the annual business meeting of NAHO's members approved a new section X of the constitution and by-laws that empowered the Board of Governors to "establish divisions of the association for more specialized development of major phases of official housing action than is practicable through the general facilities of the association." On Friday, the 14th, a definite proposal for a division devoted to housing management was presented to the Board and approved by it in principle.

The alertness and initiative of housing managers have never shown to better advantage. The proposal was submitted by a committee set up at the Management Training Institute last June. Its members were Paul L. Stannard of Cleveland, Chairman; Franklin Thorne of Washington, Secretary; Carleton F. Sharpe of Cincinnati; Raymond Voigt of Milwaukee and J. L. Stephenson of Dallas.

The Committee did most of its preliminary work by correspondence during the summer and completed its work just before and during the Annual Meeting. The final proposal was:

"Out of the discussions arose the following proposal, which is hereby submitted to the Board of Governors:

(1) There shall be established the Professional Housing Managers Division of the National Association of Housing Officials.

(2) Purpose and Objectives: (a) the establishment of professional standards of practice; (b) the interchange of housing management experience; and (c) the further-

ance of the social objectives of housing through management.

(3) To achieve these objectives it shall be the function of this Division (a) to record systematically data to establish criteria of management practice; (b) to encourage training in the profession; and (c) to undertake related activities.

(4) Membership. Charter membership shall be restricted to members of NAHO, active or associate, who were actively managing housing projects and who were members of NAHO in good standing as of October 1, 1938.

(5) Officers: A chairman or president of the Division shall be appointed by NAHO's President for the first year, and thereafter shall be elected by the members of the Division. In accordance with the enabling amendment of NAHO's constitution, he shall be *ex officio* a member of the Board of Governors. Other officers and committees as may be necessary will be appointed by the chairman of the Division. After the first year officers will be elected by the membership."

By unanimous action the Board of Governors approved the recommendation in principle and instructed the President and Executive Director, working in cooperation with the charter members, to put it into effect.

This step should open the way for even more vigorous and intelligent development of housing management. Furthermore, it should be a development tied to and supported by the general body of housing officials rather than separated and eventually alienated from them.

Several questions have to be faced in the immediate future. What officers and commit-

tees will the Division need? What facilities within NAHO's central office and on the staffs of housing managers are available for the Division's work? What dues should be charged Division members? Should the HOUSING MANAGEMENT Bulletin become its official organ? What research projects and other studies should be undertaken? How can the Division help in making management experience and opinion more readily available to project planners and architects? What charter of membership, if any, should be set up within the Division? What are reasonable qualifications for membership?

The BULLETIN will be glad to have its readers' opinions on these and similar questions. Suggestions will be forwarded to the Division's officers and those of particular interest may be discussed in these columns.

MANAGERS EVALUATE CURRENT PROBLEMS

Under the chairmanship of K.S. McAllister, Manager of Techwood Homes, Atlanta, the housing management roundtable at NAHO's Annual Meeting discussed at length several of the questions now uppermost in the minds of active managers. Taking for granted much of the general material that has been talked over at such length in the past, the roundtable brought out a great variety of experience and opinion during both morning and afternoon sessions.

Reporter J. L. Stephenson, Manager of Cedar Springs Place, Dallas, prepared for the Friday morning general session of the Meeting the following very compact summary:

"The Management Roundtable discussions brought out a remarkable similarity of management experience in the various projects and localities. Constructive discussions followed the general headings set forth in the program, and several concrete proposals to NAHO resulted.

Tenant Maintenance

"Tenant maintenance is a field that it is important to explore in the phase of housing management upon which we are now entering. The degree of tenant maintenance that can be achieved is dependent primarily upon design and construction of the project. For example, in row house developments, back yards, entrances, etc., can be well defined as a responsibility of the tenant; but such division of responsibility is much more difficult in apartment developments. Consideration must be given to the attitude of organized labor in any plan to have tenants take over janitorial duties on a permanent

basis. It has not yet been demonstrated whether any large financial saving can be effected through tenant maintenance, and its value may be more psychological than economic.

Community Activities

"There was considerable discussion on the question of the extent to which housing projects should provide tenant community facilities. While there was fairly complete concurrence that some tenant community activities are desirable and necessary, it was also felt that because of great variations in projects and localities, definite minima or maxima cannot yet be determined. The problem seems to resolve itself into a search for a middle course between a complete lack of activities at one extreme, and paternalism at the other. The problem of obtaining adequate personnel to supervise these activities is one with which many housing managers have been confronted, since present management budgets cannot carry this load. Further research into the possibilities of getting local agencies to participate to a greater degree in the supervision of project community activities is therefore essential.

Training of Managers

"Concerning the training of future managers, it was generally agreed that existing projects should be used more widely, and that while classroom discussion was valuable, experience gained in the field has greater practical value. A possible source of financial assistance for the training of management personnel exists in the provisions of the George-Deen Act, under which public money is available for certain types of vocational training. It was requested that NAHO further canvass these possibilities.

"It was further proposed that NAHO assume leadership in the development of a merit system for the selection and rating of housing managers, and the suggestion was made that NAHO be represented at the Meeting of the Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada, to be held in Washington next week. It was emphasized that coincident with any program of management training there also should be definite efforts to impress upon local officials and housing authorities the importance of competent, trained, professional personnel.

Coordination of Planning and Management

"Throughout the discussions it was brought out again and again that housing has reached the point where planning and technical men must work shoulder to shoulder with man-

agers. If in the planning of future housing we are to avoid repeating mistakes in the projects as they now exist, the accumulated experience of management is a factor not to be overlooked."

The leadoff speakers who helped to start a worth while discussion were: Abraham Goldfeld, Manager, Lavanburg Homes; Leon Raider, Project Manager, Philadelphia Housing Authority; Sherwood Reeder, Manager, Greendale, Milwaukee; A. K. Millar, Manager, Meadville Housing Corporation; Franklin Thorne, Manager, Langston Terrace, Washington, D. C.; and Miss Dorothy Cline, Management Branch, USHA.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE PUSHES ON

Not to be outdone by the roundtable or the Institute Committee on Housing Management Organization, NAHO's regular Committee on Housing Management met during the Annual Meeting. According to the official minutes, the Committee members noted that the roundtable program followed closely the suggestions made at their last meeting. The Secretary reported that a preliminary draft of the report on disinfestation procedure was already in NAHO's office and was to be distributed shortly to Committee members.

The Committee also discussed at some length a proposal to cooperate with the American Film Center in directing the production of documentary films for use in management training as well as in the public relations of local authorities. Representing the Film Center was Mr. Donald Slesinger, well known to many managers because of his work in the first Management Training Course. The Committee approved the general proposal and asked for a more specific outline of procedure. Although making clear that its approval of any film would not be given until it was completed, the Committee authorized the Chairman to cooperate with the Center in developing the work.

The Committee also recommended that NAHO should call forcefully to the attention of local housing authorities the need for the appointment of competent, trained managers early in the process of project development. This will be the subject of a Local Authorities' Letter in the near future.

For future study much was said in favor of an analysis of centralized vs. decentralized management of several projects within one city or metropolitan area. At least one large local authority is slowly developing an organization that places power and re-

sponsibility in a central management office. The resident managers work under close orders and supervision of this office. Other authorities seem disposed to leave a large measure of discretion and authority in the hands of resident managers. Although the latter has received more general approval in theory, an expert analysis of actual procedures and results would be of real value to many local authorities in the near future.

TRAINING INSTITUTE HIGHLIGHTS

The last issue of the BULLETIN contained a brief summary of the proceedings at the Housing Management Institute held in Washington, D. C., June 13-24, 1938. Space limitations made it impossible to present the complete list of speakers at the various sessions or the subjects discussed. However, as stated, all of the addresses and much of the discussion are being edited for publication in book form by the National Association of Housing Officials and will be made available at a later date.

Many of the lectures contained "rare bits" of wisdom and advice which no one either active in or interested in housing management can afford to miss. A careful reading of all of the material is highly recommended; but in order that regular readers of the BULLETIN may have a general idea of the quality of the discussions, highlights from a few of them have been selected, and are given below:

Management Prior to Occupancy

"First of all, a housing manager must be a dreamer--a realistic dreamer, if such a creature could exist. Let him take an empty notebook and start going through his project building by building. Let him walk, walk, walk; climb stairs, open doors, peep into closets; discover tunnels in the basement; turn on faucets, try window gadgets, trace pipe lines; and as he walks let him dream, dream of these same buildings not far hence filled with people--families with children. Some, widows with children; some, husbands and wives alone; some, families with babies (listen to their crying); or picture the walls after the children have smeared their dirty fingers on them. And as you dream, think what you would do about it....Then put down your answer....Write it out for your own information. You may change it a dozen times before you get through, or when the families actually move in, but put down your solution NOW."--Lionel F. Artis, Housing Manager, Lockefield Garden Apartments, Indianapolis, Indiana.

The Place and Purpose of Management

"I want to talk to you about when not to go to a lawyer. The most important discovery I made about the field of housing management is that probably the least helpful way to face the relationship with tenants is to think in legal terms,—that is, of rights and duties.....It seems to me the job of managing is best accomplished when things are made to work; when the manager makes things go. It is far better to try to adjust varying points of view and not to state them in controversial terms."---Charles S. Ascher, Secretary, Committee on Public Administration, Social Science Research Council, New York City.

"Do we appreciate fully the responsibility we assume as housing managers? Only 125 out of 13-1/2 thousand families living under substandard housing conditions in one of our southwestern cities can be benefited by new public housing even after a complete write-off of capital costs. Why? Because to date we have not been able to demonstrate how operating expense and therefore rents can be reduced sufficiently. Over thirteen thousand families in one small city must suffer the anguish of slum living until you and I develop our management techniques so that minimum standards can be maintained with drastic reductions in operating budgets.... This is not a challenge—it is a command! A command from those hundreds of thousands whose lives are stifled in unsafe and insanitary housing....."---Richard F. Voell, Acting Director of Management Review, United States Housing Authority, Washington, D. C.

Community Activities

"The purpose of community activities in a public housing project is to furnish mediums for wholesome leisure time recreation; to care for the social and educational needs of the community; to provide opportunities for self-improvement and the development of leadership; to improve family life; to foster and develop a friendly, cooperative, neighborly community spirit and environment and to stabilize tenancy."---John A. Simms, Principal Management Aide, Durkeeville Housing Project, Jacksonville, Florida.

"In my opinion the purpose of providing space for community activities is to offer the opportunity for adequate use of leisure time through which we may expect improved social adjustments between individuals and between groups. We know that the provision of social space alone, although the opportunity for voluntary group association

is thus made available, will not necessarily bring about the objective....It is my considered opinion that every housing project of more than three hundred families, must have on the staff the most skilled and experienced person to be secured within the limits of the budget whose primary responsibility will be that of leadership in tenant relations."---Miss Jean Coman, Management Supervisor, United States Housing Authority, Washington, D. C.

Maintenance by Tenants

"Tenant maintenance in public and private housing offers alert management a fertile field to explore. Skilled management must be ever watchful for ways and means to cut costs and at the same time maintain and possibly improve living and maintenance standards....All tenant contributions toward maintenance may be grouped under two broad heads: First, direct maintenance--the actual performance of certain operating functions by the tenant; Second, indirect maintenance--the interest of the tenant which helps attain the maximum economies of operation."---Robert Taylor, Manager, Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments, Chicago, Illinois.

"The time and effort spent prior to and during the initial stages of occupancy of a housing project, in devising plans and methods that will instill in the minds of the tenants a sense of responsibility, and that will create a desire and willingness to cooperate in the reasonable care and maintenance of all property and equipment, are certain of repayment to management in no small measure."---Raymond Voigt, Manager, Parklawn, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Landscape Maintenance

"The standard of landscape maintenance to be set up for the project will depend largely on the management and to a great extent on the habits of the tenants. It is hoped that a high standard of maintenance can be attained, although we must not lose sight of the fact that these areas are used very intensively and, after all, they are provided for the free use and enjoyment of the community."---C. A. Sorg, Management Division, United States Housing Authority, Washington, D. C.

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